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The Monthly Minute

with State Senator John Pappageorge

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Inside this issue:

Senate Approves Measures to Improve Friend of the Court Efficiency

2

Find me on Facebook!

2

Around the District

3

A Look Ahead

4

Mortgage Refinancing Relief

4

Legislature Passes Transportation Funding/Unemployment Insurance Extension

Dear Friend:

As you may know, the eight-member Senate Appropriations Federal Stimulus Oversight Subcommittee, of which I am a member, is charged with overseeing how Michigan spends its share of the federal stimulus money. The subcommittee has recently acted on time-sensitive funding for both transportation projects and unemployment insurance benefits.



Even though the state doesn't have discretion over how most of the stimulus funds are disbursed, we still have to act to approve all funds that were sent from the federal government. The Michigan Constitution states "No money shall be paid out of the state treasury except in pursuance of appropriations made by law."

The federal government provided \$635.4 million to the state and \$211.8 million to local governments for highway infrastructure investment. In addition, an estimated \$25.8 million could be available for transit capital assistance grants. The state was given 120 days from March 2nd, 2009 to appropriate no less than half of this money to specific transportation projects.

My colleagues and I acted quickly to provide the legislative authority needed for the state to receive the transportation funds granted in the stimulus package. House Bill (HB) 4582 was signed into law on March 31, 2009. This proposal will provide the state with critical funding to improve our roads, stimulate local businesses, and create jobs that previously did not exist.

Another important issue the Legislature has been working on is unemployment insurance. The federal stimulus package provides relief to the unemployed by extending benefits an additional seven weeks.

Senate Bill (SB) 399 and House Bills (HBs) 4668 and 4669 were introduced to modify Michigan's law in order to qualify for the additional unemployment insurance benefits. HBs 4668 and 4669 have been passed unanimously by both chambers while SB 399 is awaiting a vote in the House of Representatives.

Passage of this legislation means an estimated 213,829 unemployed workers whose benefits otherwise would have been exhausted in this calendar year now qualify for an additional seven weeks of federally-funded unemployment compensation. This should provide some help to those who have been negatively impacted by our ailing economy.

I will continue to work actively with my colleagues on the Federal Stimulus Oversight Subcommittee to ensure the stimulus money is distributed in a timely manner that is consistent with federal law.

Sincerely,

John Pappageorge



Senate Approves Measures to Improve Friend of the Court Efficiency



Measures designed to update procedures and improve efficiencies of the Friend of the Court (FOC) have been approved by the Senate and are currently before the House of Representatives.

The (FOC) office is a part of the family division of the circuit court and was created by Michigan Statute to assist the courts and families in certain cases related to child custody, parenting time, and support (including health care coverage for children and spousal support).

Senate Republicans have worked closely with Michigan Supreme Court Justice Maura

Corrigan, the Michigan Department of Human Services, the FOC Association and the State Court Administrative Office in drafting the measures to streamline FOC operations.

The eight-bill package also would benefit the DHS Office of Child Support.

Senate Bills 99-107 will:

- Simplify payment plan requirements for past due child support to afford judicial discretion on a case-by-case basis;
- Permit law enforcement agencies to "boot" vehicles of individuals behind on child support;
- Streamline the license suspension process if past due child support is owed;
- Eliminate the automatic application of surcharge assessments on arrearages;

and

- Allow the court to order a jail alternative program for non-payment of child support. Alternative examples include participation in a parenting program, drug or alcohol counseling, continuing compliance with a current support or parenting time order, or complying with a payment plan.

In October 2006 a comprehensive report with recommendations for improving efficiency and client services was submitted to the governor, the Michigan Supreme Court chief justice and legislative leadership.

I look forward to seeing these bipartisan measures to streamline the operations of Friend of the Court approved by the House and signed into law by the governor.

Find me on Facebook!

I'm on Facebook! I invite you to add me to your "friend" list by searching for "John Pappageorge." I post pictures, articles & event information to help keep my constituents as up-to-date as possible on current happenings.

Aren't familiar with Facebook? Go to www.facebook.com to learn more about this social networking tool.



Around the district...

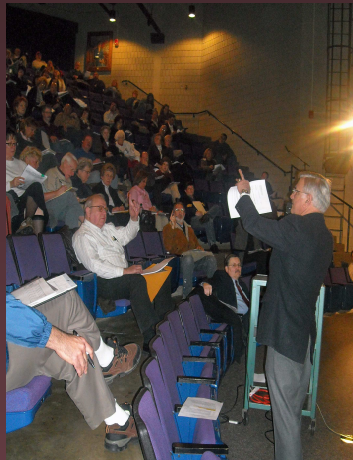
Check out photos from the property tax town hall forums I hosted in late February. Thank you to our panel members for participating and to the residents who came out to learn more about their property tax bill.



Sen. Pappageorge presenting at the Birmingham Property Tax Town Hall Forum hosted by Sen. Pappageorge, Rep. Chuck Moss and Weir Manuel Realtors. - Birmingham



Attendees gather in the Oakland Community College Theater to learn more about their property tax bill. - Royal Oak



Sen. Pappageorge fields questions from the audience. - Royal Oak



Panel members Bob Taylor and Wanda Warsinski during the question & answer period. - Royal Oak

Here are photos from the February 27th Clawson youth meeting on "Making Good Choices." Rep. Marty Knollenberg and I hosted a pizza party following the event.



Sen. Pappageorge discussing "Making Good Choices" at the Clawson youth meeting on Feb. 27. - Clawson



A group of kids enjoying the pizza party following the Clawson youth meeting. - Clawson



Students of all ages were able to participate in the event. - Clawson

A Look Ahead

I am excited to participate in the 3rd annual Park Pick-Up on April 18th. This year we will be cleaning Starr Jaycee Park in Royal Oak in conjunction with the city's "Adopt a Park for a Day" event. The Park Pick-Up is just one of many ways to celebrate Park Week (April 18 - 26) and Earth Day (April 22). If you are interested in helping to clean the park, please contact my office at the information below.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month. Every 5 minutes, a child in Michigan is a victim of child abuse and neglect. To help bring awareness to this cause, wear a blue ribbon to symbolize child abuse prevention. Don't hesitate to reach out to kids and parents in the community. Most importantly, report suspected child abuse or neglect by calling Child Protective Services at 1-800-942-4357.

April is Alcohol Awareness Month. Underage drinking is a bigger problem than ever. On an average day, 7,970 teens drink alcohol for the first time. 42.8% of students in Michigan consume at least one alcoholic drink per month. The Michigan Department of Community Health is sponsoring Alcohol Awareness Month and I urge everyone to support efforts that will reduce and prevent underage drinking in our state.

Mortgage Refinancing Relief

Many homeowners haven't been able to take advantage of historically low interest rates due to their declining property value.

Previously, homeowners without a loan to value (LTV) ratio of 80 percent or less could not qualify for refinancing. However, the Making Home Affordable Program has changed those guidelines to allow a borrower whose loans are held by Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac to refinance into a more affordable mortgage. Now, a borrower with an LTV of up to 105 percent of the new loan could qualify for refinancing.

Visit www.MakingHomeAffordable.Gov for more information.



Questions or Comments?

If you have any questions or comments regarding information in this newsletter, or wish to be removed from or added to the mailing list, please contact my office at the following information:

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